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April 28, 1999

Jane E. Henney, Commissioner of Food and Drugs  
Food and Drug Administration  
FDA (HFE-88)  
5600 Fishers Lane  
Rockville, MD 20857

Dear Commissioner Henney:

I am writing to demand that the FDA require labeling of genetically altered foods. Genetically altered foods are foods that contain genetic material (DNA) from non-related organisms such as bacteria. Currently the FDA does not require genetically altered food to be labeled. It is estimated that 30% of the milk we drink is from cows injected with the genetically altered recombinant Bovine Growth Hormone (rBGH). This hormone has been banned in the European Union and Canada due to possible links to breast and prostate cancer; however, here in the U.S. the FDA does not even require the milk to be labeled. Approximately 25% of the corn crop are from genetically altered seeds. Everything from your breakfast cereal to your tortilla chips could contain genetically altered corn without your knowledge. Currently over 30 foods including apples, carrots, and melons have genetically altered versions in the works. Some already have government approval or pending approval.

What's wrong with genetically altered foods? 57% of the biotech research involves creating plants that can tolerate stronger pesticides. That means your genetically altered corn in that cereal you give your children has even greater quantities of dangerous pesticides. Also, since the long-term effects of genetically altered foods have not been studied, the biotech companies are essentially conducting a worldwide experiment with humans and nature. It took decades to discover the full environmental impact of DDT and we're still learning about the long-term effects of widespread pesticide use. However, unlike chemical pollutants like DDT, gene pollution can never be cleaned up. New living organisms, bacteria, and viruses will be released into the environment to reproduce and mutate for generations and generations. Another problem is faux freshness. Most of us rely on qualities like the color and firmness of produce to determine the freshness. Genetically altered foods can be created to have these qualities yet still be several weeks old and of little nutritional value and you would have no way of knowing. *This is also the reason that irradiated foods should continue to be labeled.* Yet another problem is that the process is unpredictable. In 1989 a genetically altered version of the food supplement tryptophan produced an unexpected protein that turned out to be toxic. 37 people died and 1,500 were permanently disabled.

  
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Who's making them? Biotech companies such as Monsanto, who brought us Saccharin, Agent Orange and PCB's, is one of the largest supplier of genetically altered foods in the world. Others include Novartis, Calgene, and Mycogen.

Why are they making them? Profit. For example, Monsanto created Roundup Ready cotton, which is genetically altered to be resistant to the herbicide Roundup that, coincidentally, Monsanto also makes. Another pure profit example is the Terminator patent - a genetic technique designed to prevent farmers from saving seeds from their harvest, thus forcing them to buy new seeds every year.

**A survey conducted by Novartis last year revealed that 93% of Americans preferred to have genetically altered foods labeled, yet the FDA has no plans to take any steps towards mandatory labeling.** Given the fact that these foods have never been proven safe for humans or the environment, at the very least the American people should have the right to choose. **MANDATE THAT GENETICALLY ALTERED FOODS ARE LABELED AND CONTINUE TO MANDATE THAT IRRADIATED FOODS ARE LABELED!**

Sincerely,



Jyoti Osten

Cc. Senator John McCain  
Senator Jon Kyl  
Congressman J.D. Hayworth

Reference:

Mothers for Natural Law (515) 472-2809  
Pure Food Campaign (800) 253-0681  
Wild Oats Market, "X-Foods"  
Mothering, March/April 1999, pg 46  
Yoga Journal, July/August 1998, pg 30

CROSS FILE SHEET

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